Sharing Different Heartbeats

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Sharing Different Heartbeats

by sourweather

Summary

Adam's first time getting high at a college party doesn't go well. Luckily, the host decides to help him out.

Notes

ugh i love college and high school aus please enjoy this fic i wrote back in july mwah

See the end of the work for more notes

Whether it's a concert, a club, or just the subwoofer he had Darko help him install in his piece of shit car, nothing makes Nigel feel more alive than the thrum of music in his chest. The bass reverberates in his bones, shakes him in time. Touches him. It's a beautiful thing, it really fucking is. Makes him feel connected to something more than himself, even if it's just for a little while.

And the heartbeat of the music is alive and well in their place tonight. The little run down house on the edge of campus that he'd rented with Darko is now a bona fide weekend destination for every slut, junkie, and douchebag enrolled at their university, and Nigel couldn't be prouder of that fact. Every Saturday it's packed with bodies, with booze, with *sound,* until it all blends into an inescapable mass that Nigel has no choice but to dissolve in and become a part of. It's the only time that he can really detach himself from everything else. Some people might find the high-energy environment draining, but to Nigel it's rejuvenating. He melts into the night, lets the beat guide him. It's easy.

"Nigel!"

She crashes into him, his arm winding its way around her waist automatically when she leans her weight into his right shoulder.

"There you are," he says, although he wasn't really looking for her. Gabi is always here, he reckoned he'd run into her eventually. She never misses a party, knows how to hold her liquor, she's down to fuck more often than not. Nigel really couldn't ask for more in a girl, even if she's turned him down every time he mentioned things getting a little more serious between them. "Having fun, darling?"

Gabi laughs, half mocking and half not, at the pet name, her body draped over his own. She's wasted. "Come with me," she slurs, and reaches to tug at his arm. Now, nine times out of ten, when Gabi says that it means he's about to get his dick wet. So naturally he fucking goes. She doesn't lead him upstairs, though.

The little crowd that's formed off to the side of the room parts around him when he approaches, a dozen or so faces all smirking and snickering. "You have to see it," Gabi is saying over the music, leaning close to his ear to be heard. "It was Dan's idea, it's hilarious."

She guides him to the centre of the crowd, giggling all the while. There, on his stained, shitty sofa, is the most beautiful boy Nigel's ever seen in his fucking life.

Dark hair, tiny frame, pale blue sweater. He looks like he jumped out of a country club advertisement, and Nigel might not know his story but he definitely doesn't fucking belong here. He's got his arms folded tight around himself, his body rocking slightly back and forth. Poor thing looks miserable. His eyes dart around the room, never able to settle on anything. Eventually, they flick up to Nigel. His pupils are blown wide as dinner plates.

Nigel's pinned in place for a moment. Not just by the boy's looks, either. No, it's the terror in his soft face that gives Nigel pause.

Everybody's been there, at least once or twice. You take a little too much, or your head goes to a weird place, or the music is playing over your nerves wrong. Suddenly everything is too big, or too small, and you're sure that you're never gonna feel normal again. It's hard enough when you know what you're doing, when you're with your friends. This kid is alone, though. And he's scared shitless.

Gabi's laughter rings out at his side, accompanied by chuckles from a few other partygoers. "Look at him," she says, grinning. "Kid's tripping his fucking balls off."

Nigel doesn't join her. "What's he on?" he asks, turning to her with a frown. "Is he okay, do you think?"

She shrugs, already looking like she's getting bored with the spectacle. "Dan and his boys gave him something, I don't know. He's high as fuck on whatever it is, though, watch." And Gabi claps her hands once in front of the boy. He flinches, clutching harder at his sleeves, and Nigel finds himself flinching too. "Dan and Darko were talking about rolling him down the hill near the football field, you want to come?"

He stares at her, frown turning quickly to a snarl. "What? No, what the fuck? He's freaking out, Gab, we're not gonna roll him down the fucking hill."

Gabi gives him a dubious look. "You did it to me, the first time I got high. Darko, too."

"You fucking liked it." His hands curl into fists. He's aware of the double-standard, here, of course. Knows damn well that Gabi had puked her guts out at the bottom of that hill and Nigel had laughed about it. It's different this time, though. That much is clear to him.

"Everybody likes it," she agrees. "And it's funny. And this kid's obviously never been high before, so let's do it."

Nigel glares at her, but he saves his breath. He's not gonna let his asshole friends lay a finger on this kid anyway, he doesn't need to convince her. Instead he kneels in front of the boy. "Hey, look at me," The boy on the couch is staring at his own shoes. Nigel waves a hand in front of his face. "Hey, you! Up here!"

The boy looks at him. Past him. It's something. Nigel can almost see his reflection in those huge, glistening eyes of his.

"Hi," Nigel says, struggling to find the balance between gentling the poor creature and being fucking heard over all the chatter and the music. "What's your name?"

"Nigel, come on. It's fine, let's just drop it, you can tell the guys not to bother him if you want. Let's just go get a drink."

He grits his teeth, but he doesn't address her. "I'm Nigel," he adds. The boy has started gnawing on his fingernails. "This your first party, gorgeous?" He hadn't really meant for the endearment to slip out, but shit, maybe it helps. Seems just as good as anything else he's got up his sleeve, which is basically fucking nothing.

The boy stares into the distance for a moment, a look of dull horror on his face. When his eyes land on Nigel again, he nods, slowly.

Nigel tries to look sympathetic. “Doesn’t look like you’re having a very good time, eh? You okay?”

He looks around the room again, visibly unsure. Then he leans closer, closer. Nigel does the same, shaken a bit by the grave expression that has overtaken the boy’s face.

“...I think I’m dying.”

Now, if anybody else had said that to him, he’d be fucking laughing. Hell, when Darko says shit like that to him, Nigel just fires back an unimpressed ‘Then die,’ and keeps partying without him.

For whatever reason, hearing this boy say it makes him see fucking red.

“What did he take?” he demands, and when Gabi doesn’t respond he whips his head around to growl up at her. “I said what did you fucking give him?!”

Gabi rolls her eyes. “Jesus, Nigel, what’s wrong with you tonight?”

“What’s wrong with *me?* Fucking look at the kid, you think he wanted to get that fucked up?”

“Calm down!” she shouts. “I already told you, it wasn’t even my idea. It was Dan’s.”

“Danny’s a fucking psycho and you know it,” Nigel mutters. “He could’ve given him anything, you didn’t think to stop him?”

Gabi groans. “He’s fine! He’s having a bad trip, he’s not gonna fucking OD! Are you really going to let this ruin the entire night?”

She’s a lost cause. He’s on his own, then. Nigel reaches out, slowly, praying he doesn’t end up spooking the poor thing. The boy jumps a little when Nigel’s hand lands on his shoulder, but he doesn’t freak out or pull away. “Hey, kid? Listen, you’re not gonna die, okay? You’re going to be fine.”

The contact seems to steady him a bit. Holds him in place. His voice is thin when he asks “Are you sure?” A little clumsy around the words, his mouth undoubtedly struggling to cooperate.

He smiles, squeezing the younger man’s shoulder through his sweater.

“I promise.”

A tiny, timid smile blooms on the kid’s face at that, and Nigel feels himself melt. He’s adorable. “I’m Adam.”

The song changes. The new beat surging into his system is faster, heavier. The boy in front of him curls in on himself, letting out a pained little sound that breaks Nigel’s fucking heart. He

glances around the house for a moment, searching for someone who looks like they give a shit about what's going on. No dice. There's a few people staring at Nigel, but but it's all either with bemusement or, in Gabi's case, irritation.

"Did you come here by yourself, gorgeous?" he asks, though no one else stands out in the crowd. "You have a friend with you, somebody who could take you back to your place?"

He doesn't answer, still tugging anxiously at the cuffs of his sweater. Shit.

Nigel takes a long look at Adam. He's like a scared little rabbit, sitting here paralyzed. Nigel's got a hell of a lot more experience with this shit than Adam does, but he still remembers how awful his first bad trip had been. And he'd had Darko with him. Not much of a comfort to most people, but Nigel was glad to fucking get it.

He sighs, scratches at his jaw. "Alright," he says, mind made up. "Come on, we're going upstairs."

Adam blinks, his mouth falling open. "What?"

"What?" Gabi echoes.

Nigel stands, holding out a hand to help the kid up. "This is my house, my room's upstairs. It's a bit quieter there, and not nearly as crowded. I'll look after you while you ride this shit out, if you want."

"Fucking hell," Gabi mutters. "You know what? Fuck you. I'm not spending my night babysitting!"

"Then go," Nigel replies. He doesn't look at her. "I'm sure Darko and Danny are having a fucking blast, go find 'em."

Adam is still staring at his hand, brows drawn tight together.

"...You don't have to. I know you don't know me from any of these assholes. But if you don't want to go upstairs, I'm gonna at least want to stick close by, just to keep an eye out."

He takes Nigel's hand, then. His palm is soft, shaking. Nigel smiles as he hauls the kid to his feet.

Adam's grip turns vice tight as soon as he stands, his other hand quickly seizing Nigel's bicep.

"Oh," he groans, swaying in place. "I – I'm spinning, I can't – "

"That's normal," he soothes. "You're fine. Don't close your eyes though, trust me, it makes it worse."

He nods, his dark curls bouncing with the motion. "Maybe I should just… can I sit back down?"

“Let’s just get you somewhere comfortable first, yeah?”

“I don’t know if I can,” he slurs, and he sounds genuinely remorseful about it. “ ‘M sorry.” He’s clinging to Nigel like a fucking vine. Again, Nigel makes up his mind quickly.

“C’mere,” he says, and then he’s lifting the small man with a grunt. Adam yelps, arms wrapping tight around Nigel’s shoulders. Nigel guides him to wrap his legs around him, too, and only gets clumsily kicked once in the process.

“Sorry,” he says again, and Nigel sets off for the stairs.

He shrugs, effortlessly ascending even with Adam in his arms. “Shit, you weigh fucking nothing, you know that? No wonder you’re so high, bet you can’t even take fucking cold medicine without it knocking you on your ass.”

The kid groans painfully once more, nearly suffocating him with how tight he hangs on.

“You closed your eyes, didn’t you?”

“Mhm,” he whines pitifully. “You were right. I feel sick.”

“I’ve got a bathroom if you need to throw up.”

“Okay… thank you,” he says, and it’s the most polite someone’s ever been about barfing at Nigel’s house.

It’s cute, in a way.

Nigel struggles to get his bedroom door open, but the second he closes it behind them the din from downstairs eases off. It’s still there, muffled through the floor. The heartbeat of the music still buzzes in him a bit. It’s better, though. Secluded.

He peels Adam off of himself, sitting him gently on the bed. His room is a disaster, but Adam doesn’t seem to mind. Or notice. It’s still a hell of a lot better than being downstairs, he supposes.

Nigel’s on a mission, now. The only thing on his mind is making Adam safe and comfortable, wiping the shell-shocked little look from his sweet face. Without thinking, Nigel drops back to his knees. He reaches for the Adam’s Converse, tugging at the laces. His scrawny legs pull back immediately, flinching inward again.

“W-What are you doing?” Adam demands, his whole wiry body turning tense.

It makes Nigel freeze. All at once, he realizes how this must look. He’s taken a stranger, somebody smaller and weaker than him – somebody who is *way* too fucked up to do much about it – to his bedroom. And now he’s taking off his fucking clothes.

Nigel stammers for a moment, caught between being ashamed that he hadn’t thought this through more, offended that Adam would think he’d take advantage of him, and fucking furious at the idea that someone *would* take advantage. If Nigel hadn’t been there, would

someone have grabbed the poor thing themselves? Gabi did say that Dan got the kid high to begin with, and Nigel definitely wouldn't put it past him to do something that fucked up. The thought makes him grit his teeth, makes him want to send everybody else home and keep Adam safe.

"I'm sorry," he says a moment later, but it comes out rough and aggressive. He can't help it, Adam has awakened something in him. Something fierce, something protective. He breathes, in through his nose and out through his mouth, forcing himself to turn gentle. As gentle as he can manage, anyway. "I was just taking your shoes off, so you could get comfortable. I guess I'm used to hanging out with wasted chicks. They're always stumbling around in their high heels, you kind of have to take their shoes off for their own good at a certain point in the night. I wasn't really thinking. I should've asked first. You can leave them on, if you want to."

Adam thinks it over for a moment, as much as he can with his head swimming how it is, then lowers his feet again. "...Okay," he mutters. "Jus' my shoes."

"Of course."

He swallows, working his jaw and frowning to himself. Nigel watches.

"I feel like I'm talking funny," Adam says. "Am I talking funny?"

Nigel chuckles, setting the sneakers aside. He's talking a bit more now that he's away from that crowd. That's good. "That's normal, too. Don't worry."

"It is?" He works his mouth some more. "My tongue feels… big."

It makes Nigel snort, and then Adam's laughing, too. A little too sharp, too tight to be natural. He doesn't seem like he's on the verge of a panic attack anymore, though.

"...I should get you some water," Nigel says, standing awkwardly. "Uh, feel free to get under the blanket, if you want. Being somewhere soft helps with the anxiety."

He rushes downstairs, breezing past the bodies clogging the house. What's up with him tonight? He's nervous around Adam, possessive over him. He barely knows who the kid is, but for whatever reason Nigel just wants to make him happy.

When he returns, deep in his thoughts and desperate to get lost in the sound again, he almost drops the water.

Adam is curled up in Nigel's bed, raven hair splayed out over his pillowcase. The blanket is pulled up to his chin, his eyes staring blankly up at the ceiling.

Nigel curses to himself, steeling his nerves. He's being stupid. It's not like he's never had somebody in his bed before. "Drink this," he says, taking a seat beside Adam. Adam sits up slowly, struggling to move his body. He takes the cup, sips at its contents. "I grabbed you a snack from the pantry, too, if you get hungry."

"Thank you," he says again.

“How are you feeling?”

Adam takes a breath, brings his knees close to his chest. “Dizzy,” he finally replies. “Heavy. I keep… feeling like a lot of time is passing. I feel like I’ve been here for hours. I’m… my heart feels… weird. Are you sure I’m okay?”

“You’re okay,” Nigel says firmly. He doesn’t leave any room for doubt. Thinking about being fucked up is only gonna freak him out more. “Trust me, I know a thing or two about this kind of shit. If I thought you needed to see a fucking doctor, you’d already be there. You’re okay.”

He nods, set as much at ease as Nigel suspects he’ll get tonight. “What do we do now?”

Nigel shrugs. “You’re just gonna have to wait it out, gorgeous. Nothing I can really do except keep you company until you sober up, I’m afraid.”

Adam sighs, takes another small sip of his water. His glassy eyes land on the TV sitting atop Nigel’s barren bookshelf. “Can we watch a movie?” He asks.

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The first thing Nigel hears when he wakes is a soft, pained groan. He cracks one eye open, his brain still clinging stubbornly to sleep.

It takes him a minute to remember why there’s a cute, groggy boy in his bed. Adam has his face in his hands, rubbing at his temples. His sweater is rumpled, his curls a mess.

They’d been up all night, together. Long after the majority of the party had already gone home. They watched one movie, then two. Adam couldn’t make his spinning thoughts focus on either of them, though. So Nigel ended up talking his ear off for hours on end while Adam just stared stupidly at the screen. He told every funny story he could think of, but when he ran out and finally turned quiet, Adam nudged him with his bony little elbow and slurred a soft ‘Keep talking, Nigel.’ And Nigel couldn’t say no, so he just kept fucking going, rambling on about whatever came to mind. It was nice, even if Adam wasn’t the most attentive audience in his current state.

He’d been planning on taking Adam back home, or letting him crash on the couch downstairs once everything settled down. He certainly hadn’t meant for Adam to pass out in his bed, much less to fall asleep right next to him. Not much he can do about it now, though.

“How’re you feeling?” Nigel mumbles, and Adam groans again.

“Awful.”

Poor darling. “You can go back to sleep, if you want to,” he offers awkwardly. “I mean, I’m not gonna throw you out or anything.”

Adam runs a hand through his hair, yawns. A shy part of Nigel is praying that he’ll take the invitation and lie back down, warm his bed a while longer. “Thank you, but I think I want to go back to my dorm.”

Damn. “Alright. Take care, gorgeous. Glad you’re okay.”

And then he’s crawling out of Nigel’s bed, fumbling with his sneakers, creeping out into the hallway. He’s gone. And Nigel can’t explain why, but it feels fucking wrong. He barely knew the kid, was just looking after him so he didn’t get hurt his first time getting high. It shouldn’t matter that he left as soon as he sobered up, what else was Nigel expecting?

He’s in a shit mood, after that, though. Blames it on being hungover even though he’d only had one drink before taking Adam to his room last night. And then the feeling doesn’t go away. Somehow Adam’s gotten under his skin, and as the days go by the boy stays stubbornly on his mind. It’s maddening.

Two weeks go by before he sees Adam again. It’s a Thursday evening, and there’s a knock at his front door. Nigel forgets how to fucking speak when he opens it and sees the face that’s been filling his head for days on end, smiling up at him.

“Adam…”

“Hello, Nigel.” Now that his pupils aren’t the size of fucking manhole covers, Nigel gets a chance to properly observe their color. Blue. Dazzling, beautiful blue. Fucking hell.

“What’s up?” he asks, because he can’t just stand there gawking at him. As much as he’d like to.

Adam tugs at the sleeves of his sweatshirt, looking down at his hands. “I just wanted to stop by. I realized that I left without really thanking you, before. So... thank you.”

Nigel smiles. God, he’s cute. “You don’t need to thank me, I was just looking out. No big deal.”

“No,” Adam replies, shaking his head forcefully. “No, it is a big deal. I don’t know what would’ve happened if you hadn’t been there, and you were very kind to me even though you had no reason to be.”

He feels his face turn warm. Rubs awkwardly at the back of his neck. “Well, shit. If you say so. You’re welcome, I guess.”

Adam’s mouth twists, he rocks a little on his feet. “…I was only there that night because my girlfriend broke up with me,” he mutters after a moment.

Nigel’s mood plummets at the word ‘girlfriend’, then cautiously perks up again at ‘broke up’. “That so?”

“Mhm. She said that I didn’t know how to have fun, so I thought that I could go to a party and prove her wrong. Then some men asked me if I wanted to take pills with them, and I felt like I couldn’t say no, and…” he trails off, breathing out a hollow laugh a moment later. “I guess she was right, after all.”

It breaks his heart. Adam looks up at him when Nigel places a firm hand on his shoulder, squeezing reassuringly for emphasis. It might be wishful thinking, but he swears Adam’s

cheeks turn a bit rosy.

“Hey,” Nigel says. “You wanna know something?”

Adam hums.

“I had more fun hanging out with you that night than I’ve had at any fucking party.”

It makes the younger man smile, shyly ducking his head again. “You’re just saying that to make me feel better,” he mumbles. “But thank you. I liked spending time with you, too. I wouldn’t necessarily say that I had a good time, but I was glad that you were there.”

Nigel forces himself to pull his hand away, then. Neither man says anything for a minute or so, and Nigel knows that he should send Adam on his way but he can’t bring himself to actually do it.

“Alright,” he sighs at last. “I’ll uh, let you get back to your dorm − ”

Suddenly Adam is lifting himself onto his toes, steadying himself with a hand on Nigel’s chest as he leans close to kiss his cheek. It only lasts a moment, but Nigel’s spellbound when Adam pulls away.

“...I don’t think I want to go to another one of your parties,” Adam says softly, peering up at Nigel through his lashes. “But I like to go for walks through the park on Friday nights, if you wanted to join me tomorrow.”

Just that easy, his heart is pounding. Buzzing, like there’s a song pulsing in his chest. He looks down at Adam, and prays that he feels it, too.

End Notes

thanks so much to arrnutsss, lexicons, kmac, rose, and all of my raindrops for your support! Much love<3

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